DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 263 060 SP 026 654

AUTHOR Stier, William F., Jr.
TITLE Competencies in Amateur/Youth Coaching.
PUB DATE [85]
NOTE 12p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Athletic Coaches; *Children; Elementary Education; *Participant Satisfaction; Team Sports; Training Methods; *Youth Programs

ABSTRACT

Youth sports can be a positive experience for children if adults involved are aware of their impact on the child's development. An analysis is given of the problems and challenges that are evident in the way sports for young people are conducted. Particular emphasis is placed upon the role of the amateur coaches of team sports for children. Competencies and skills needed on the part of coaches are listed under the categories of: (1) technical skills; (2) interpersonal skills; (3) conceptual skills; and (4) commitment and decision skills. Several national organizations are identified which exist for the purpose of providing opportunities for acquiring basic competencies necessary for coaches to insure a suitable learning climate and atmosphere for young people. A list is provided of areas of competency in which youth coaches should strive to become minimally skilled. (JD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED263060

COMPETENCIES IN AMATEUR/YOUTH COACHING

William F. Stier, Jr.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

W. Stier

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

SP 026 654

COMPETENCIES IN AMATEUR/YOUTH COACHING

Youth sports provide opportunities for some 20 million young girls and boys to participate in a wide variety of physical activities, both team activities and individual activities. While some individuals have characterized youth sports as legalized child abuse, others have classified such activities as excellent facilitators of growth and development in a wide range of areas - physically, socially, psychologically, mentally, etc.

In addition to the millions of young participants involved in youth sports today in the United States, there are also several million adult volunteers serving as coaches of these young people. These adults volunteer their time, money, efforts and other resources for a variety of reasons, some more effectively than others. These adult volunteers fill an unique role and provide a meaningful and most necessary service to the young people involved in youth sports, as well as to the whole concept of sport participation for the young of this country.

The value of youth sport programs within the United States depends, to a significant degree, upon the quality of adult leadership and upon the supporting environment in which the youth sport movement finds itself dependent upon. The ultimate justification for participation in sport activities of the young of this country is the positive growth and development of these children through a vehicle(s) not otherwise available to such youth.

WHY DO CHILDREN PARTICIPATE?

Children participate for a wide variety of reasons, some easily discernable and some not so. For the most part, children often find sport participation

SP 0266 54

an extension of their spontaneous play implying that they elect to particiipte in order to:

1. have fun
2. learn specific motor skills
3. socialize with friends and to make new friends
4. experience the excitement of competitiveness at the level at which children find themselves.

Such wholesome objectives must be incorporated into the very being of organized youth sports throughout this country. Every decision, every action taken within the confines of the organized youth sport movement should be made and taken in light of these four objectives (as seen by children themselves).

Although youth sports should be fun, they are not merely an organized method of providing baby-sitting services for parents. Neither are youth sports merely a farm system for future sports participation by non-youth participants. The olympic movement, the olympic experience itself, has served to create a very postive, strong and lasting impact upon participation in sport by the young, as well as an equally strong and lasting effect upon the parents of these young participants, and upon the general public as well.

ATTRITION RATE

A recent national study (involving 1500 families) revealed that 74% of the parents encouraged their children to play organized youth sports. However, 86% of these same parents believe there is still too much emphasis placed on winning and not enough emphasis placed (by the organizers and by the coaches of youth sport activities) upon the physical and psychological development of the young boys and girls involved in the sport activities. Strange isn't it!

Additional statistical data indicate that some 75% of the children who started their involvement in youth sports at age six had simply dropped out of organized sport participation by the age of 15 (other studies cite age 12). The question, the challenge, seems to be how to keep -- over an extended period of time -- our young people happily involved and active in their experience with sport. How can this excessive rate of attrition be reduced? Why is such dissatisfaction with youth sport programs seemingly rampant today? What are some of the problems and challenges evident today with the conduct of sports for our young people? Some of these problems, challenges include:

1. poorly trained coaches and supervisors/organizers
2. little league syndrome, overempahsis on winning, overly competitive programs
3. apparent mismatches between children's expectations and reality
4. poor examples of parents and/or of coaches/administrators/organizers
5. poor teaching/coaching technique
6. lack of knowledge in crucial areas such as psychology of learning, sports medicine, conditioning and training, nutrition, motivation, etc.
7. differences between youth sport coaching and non-youth sport coaching (attempting to coach youth sports in similar fashion as the pros or college sports).
8. coaching through negative reinforcement rather than placing emphasis on the positive.
9. parents attempting to live vicariously through the efforts of their children

10. physical differences in terms of actual physical development of children. The maturation process of a 12 year old boy may, on the one hand, be physically overdeveloped as a 16 year old or, on the other hand, as underdeveloped as an 8 year old. A glaring weakness is an apparent ignorance of the differences in young childen in terms of such physical maturation.

COMPETENCIES REQUIRED OF COACHES

The situation in which a well meaning volunteer coach picks up a ball and bat and starts to "coach" without proper preparation and training is both a tragedy and a farce. It is also reality. The volunteer coach -- upon whom the entire program of youth sports rests -- must become minimally competent and must be willing to continue to learn to refine his/her skills and competencies. What exactly are these general skills and competencies which are so often spoken of in terms of coaching young people?

Generally speaking, these competencies, these skills may be classified under the following headings:

1. technical skills
2. interpersonal skills
3. conceptual skills
4. commitment/decision skills

The category of technical skills includes the x's and o's of coaching, the specific coaching techniques, the specific coaching methods and strategies which form the foundation of the knowledge base for skills acquisition.

Interpersonal skills (needed in dealings with the young participants, the parents and various publics) include the ability to relate to others, to

understand and interpret what others are trying to communicate, ability to possess both sympathy and empathy, ability to deal in a positive fashion with others and to make others feel comfortable, to feel that their experience was worthwhile and meaningful -- something of worth, of value.

Conceptual skills refer to the ability to view the entire picture, to hold in proper perspective the role which youth sport plays in the general scheme of things, i.e., in the total development of the youngster. Worrying about one's own little fiefdom (winning or losing a particular contest) in contrast to the total kingdom (making the experience a worthwhile learning experience for the participant) is not demonstration of true conceptual skill.

Dedication - commitment skills refers to the willingness to spend the time and effort so necessary to insure a meaningful learning experience by those young participants electing to take part in youth sport activities. This willingness to spend the time and to expend effort to help the youth of this country is of noble merit indeed. The willingness to similarly develop greater technical, interpersonal and conceptual skills on behalf of the youth coach should be of the highest priority. Without the increased skill level on behalf of youth sport coaches in these areas of competency, the level of coaching and teaching (and hence the level of learning) taking place in youth sports will continue to be severely hampered.

The objective is simple enough. Volunteer coaches need better orientation, more extensive educational supervision, more opportunities for meaningful in-service education and effective objective and subjective evaluation by qualified supervisors and organizers in order to facilitate realization of the goals of youth sports. Youth sports in this country must concentrate on the needs of the chidren rather than on the needs of the adults - parents and coaches. It

is really just that simple. The perceptions of many adults (parents as well as coaches) as to what children really want from their sport experience are often erroneous. Youth sports should exist for the purpose of providing a true learning experience, a growing experience which are simultaneously enjoyable and meaningful for the participant. More emphasis should be on those facets of youth sports which encourage children to maintain their involvement in sport activity. Less emphasis should be placed on the more visible but yet traditional part of such programs -- the highly competitive nature of participation with the resultant evils which follow.

Somehow the wealth of information and facts which physical educators and sport scientists have uncovered must be transferred from the research reports of the universities and colleges to the playing fields and courts where the youngsters exist and participate. The tendency to provide organizations and opportunities for the ELITIST child while almost totally forgetting the so-called average or below average child is morally wrong, not to mention plain stupid. Perhaps it is necessary to include specific rules and regulations which insure equal or near equal participation opportunities.

Whatever steps are taken, the crux of the issue remains the same -- those individuals who sponsor and promote youth sports must be shown the correct course of action to follow in their daily actions with the youth of this country.

There are several national organizations existing for the purpose of providing opportunities for acquiring basic competencies necessary to insure a suitable learning climate and atmosphere for our youth. These organizations which are curently addressing this challenge include:

(a) The Youth Sport Institute (YSI), from Michigan State University

(b) The American Coaching Effectiveness Program (ACEP), a private enterprise attempt involving some 25,000 youth coaches and almost 100 instructors

(c) The Canadian National Coaching Certification Program (CNCCP)

(d) The National Youth Sports Coaches Association (NYSCA), a non-profit volunteer youth coaches organization.

Of the above four organizations, three are non-profit and the latter organization is solely oriented to the youth sport arena while the first three listed above may have programs which might be applicable for interscholastic coaches/sports as well as youth sports/coaches.

Some of the basic questions which these organizations are attempting to enable future coaches to answer include:

1. nature and severity of injuries
2. ages when the skills of a sport can be efficiently and effectively learned
3. appropriate length of the playing season
4. psychological effectiveness of various coaching styles on children
5. methods of selecting teams and organizing competition for greatest equality and learning effectiveness

It is imperative that those involved in the coaching and/or administration of youth sports become more capable, minimally competent in their dealings with our young people. It is not the purpose of this presentation to debate or present advantages/disadvantages of one type of organization over another. Rather, the purpose is to emphasize that there are some basic competencies which all youth sport coaches must be able to demonstrate minimum familiarity with if these same coaches are to facilitate the young participants' realiza-

tion of the many positive and worthwhile goals and objectives which are so often espoused by those of us endorsing the value of youth sports in this country.

Some of the basic areas of competencies in which youth coaches should strive to become minimally skilled include, but are not limited to, the following:

(a) sport specific coaching techniques and skill development

(b) first aid/injury care and prevention

(c) legal liability

(d) time management

(e) role of the coach, parents, officials, fans and the young participants

(f) expectations and needs (physical, psychological, social, mental) of the young boys and girls participating in sports

(g) skill analysis, detecting/correcting errors in skill techinque

(h) nutrition

(i) conditioning and training (examples of specific traiing programs)

(j) game rules

(k) working functions and growth patterns of youth (male/female)

(l) administration and organization -- including planning of pre-practice time, practice time and post-practice time

(m) motivation techniques (positive reinforcement rather than negative)

(n) teaching/coaching/leading through example

(o) communication (two-way process)

(p) creation of a proper learning atmosphere

(q) maintenance of order and discipline, with empathy, sympathy and understanding

Parents and coaches need to recognize that enjoyment of the activity -- after all it is a game -- is of paramount importance if the existing attrition rate alluded to earlier is to be addressed. Providing opportunities to play and compete in a safe environment, in an activity equal and suitable to ones own skill level and maturity are esssential. To enable the participant to take pleasure in exercising and in experiencing the activity for the sake of the activity itself is a goal worthy of being pursued. To be able to learn and master skills without fear of failure or punishment should be the norm, not the exception. The bottom line is the need to be aware and to recognize that children are not miniature adults and need not be treated as such, either on or off the playing fields/courts.

The following BILL OF RIGHTS FOR YOUNG ATHLETES (AAHPERD) should serve as the guiding principles in the organization and implementation of all youth sports:

1. Right to the opportunity to participate in sports regardless of ability level
2. Right to participate at a level that is commensurate with each child's developmental level
3. Right to have qualified adult leadership
4. Right to participate in safe and healthy environments
5. Right of each child to share in the leadership and decision-making of their sport participation
6. Right to play as a child not as an adult
7. Right to proper preparation for participation in the sport
8. Right to an equal opportunity to strive for success
9. Right to be treated with dignity by all involved
10. Right to have fun through sport

CONCLUSION:

Youth sports can be (and indeed must be) a wholesome, positive experience for all children if those adults involved in youth sports are fully aware of the potential impact that such involvement has upon each child's development, and if these same adults are truly caring in their concern for these young participants. The goals which we all strive to reach include a coaching constituency in possession of a sound philosophy of teaching/coaching skills, effective safety and medically sound training methods, coupled with sound educational delivery techniques. We must remain cognizant that youth sports are not organized for adults. Youth sports should not be vehicles for ego trips of adults, whether parents or coaches.

Youth sports exist for the children participating in the various activities. The activities should be significant learning experience which should not only teach and promote development (in a variety of areas) for the child but should also be self motivating and enjoyable for the young person.

If we are successful in enabling more and more coaches of youth sports to develop sound coaching philosophies, to possess minimum competencies in the areas of sport psychology, sport pedagogy and sport physiology, then we will have gone a long way to reaching the potential which we recognize exists for the activities referred to as YOUTH SPORTS. But, it is up to us -- you and me -- to see that we do more than merely talk about the need to upgrade the competency level of youth sports coaches. We need to do something about it and the time to start is now.

by: Dr. William F. Stier, Jr.
Chairperson/Professor: Physical Education & Sport
State University of New York
Brockport, New York 14420